

Business

DJ business still a solid hit

■ 2 brothers-partners continue to grow company started by Bonner senior 18 years ago.

By **SUSAN L. SERBIN**
Times Correspondent

HAVERTOWN - On Nov. 21, 1980, the Daily Times ran an article with the headline, "He's busy turning a sound idea into a solid hit." It was all about a disc jockey business being cultivated by 17-year-old Monsignor Bonner senior Ken Schaffer.

Here's another article. 18 years later, and Ken Schaffer is still at it. The business was Schaffer Sound Productions then, as it is now. The only changes have been an Inc. in the name, a brother as partner, a pool of up to 50 DJs, thousand of jobs a year - okay, so it's not exactly the same business, but they still play music.

Ken Schaffer, 34, and his brother Jon, 28, orchestrate tunes around the Delaware Valley, running the company from offices in Havertown into which they expended about 18 months ago. Perhaps surprisingly, the breakdown of business is almost the same as Ken cited in 1980. About 40 percent is from dances, although that is now club-based, rather than at schools, like his first job in 1977 at St. Denis, where he was paid \$50 for the night. The firm's rates today range from \$75 to \$125 per hour.

Another 20 percent is a variety of parties, corporate work and sports venues. Weddings constitute the remaining 40 percent where the Schaffers have a special approach.

"Weddings we treat differently from other work. It's a very important event," said Jon, knowledgeable, although both brothers are single. "We have a cap (of 15) on how many weddings we will do on any one day."

SSP is a service and people business, despite all the hardware required. "It's not a business where advertising on TV or in print

is that valuable. It's word of mouth. We get referrals from 70 banquet facilities. Every bride will hear our name (when planning a wedding)," said Jon Schaffer.

And when deciding on entertainment for a reception, those brides can peruse a detailed package of music selections, suggestions, general information and procedures the DJ will observe. They can also go higher tech and download everything from SSP's web site.

Technology has driven more than advertising and customer service. In 1994, SSP "retooled." The equipment had become smaller and lighter. And we went 100 percent CD, since there's virtually nothing you can't find on CD. In a two-year period, we spent over \$200,000, for the set-ups ready for DJs, as well as equipment we've installed in clubs at which our DJs regularly appear," said Ken Schaffer, who has a degree in communications from Villanova University.

Diversity appears in the DJs who range in age from 16 to 60. Matching the right personality and job is largely Jon's responsibility. He manages staffing and sales, using a marketing degree from Drexel. He also works about 40 jobs a year, not only to keep in touch with clients, but because he recognizes he is personally in demand.

David Bowen, sales manager, and Joe Maiorano, operations manager and DJ, are the other two SSP fulltime employees. But the Schaffers say they, and others working for the company, are much more than hired hands.



Jon Schaffer, left, and his brother Ken have built an empire in music.

Times staff photo by PAULAE DOYLE

"We come from a very tight-knit family environment, and run the business more like a family," said Jon Schaffer, adding they still have strong school ties to Bonner, and support the community through various benefit work.

On the subject of family, Ken Schaffer said younger brother David, 21, can be seen and heard around town, Danny, 20, has yet to catch the bug. Their sister, Gina, has worked in the office, and both mom and dad have been very supportive throughout the SSP history."

The Schaffers observed this business may seem attractive to a guy or girl who wants to put several thousand dollars into equipment and work weekend parties or clubs. Possible, they say but a far cry from the scope of SSP, with it's 20 years of experience. And, they add, be ready to sacrifice some personal life. When the weekends hit, everybody else is ready to party. And though they have fun, these DJs are just going to work.

**FACES
BEHIND
PLACES**
**Schaffer Sound
Productions Inc.**

At a glance

Name: Schaffer Sound Productions, Inc.

Address: L&M Professional Center
1254 West Chester Pike
Havertown, PA 19083

Phone/e-mail: (610) 449-9000/info@schaffersound.com

Internet address: www.schaffersound.com

Established: 1977

Product/Service: Disc Jockey-Emcée Entertainment

Owners: Partners Ken and Jon Schaffer

Number of Employees: 4 full-time approximately 50 DJs as contractors

Annual Sales/Earning: Unavailable